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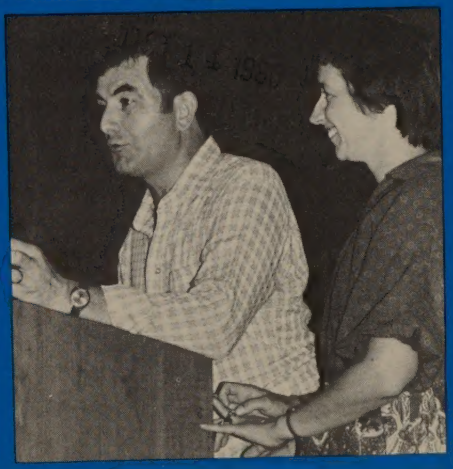

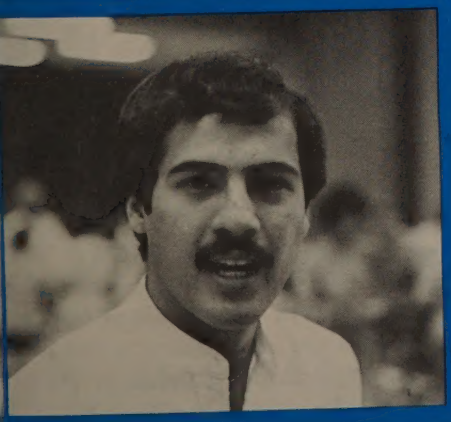

MARIAPOLIS 80

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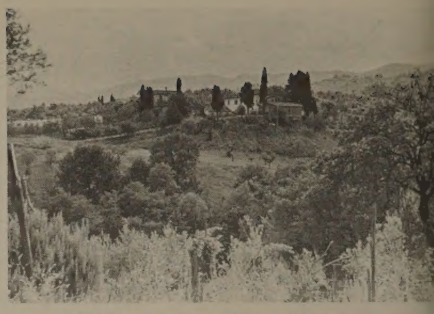
2 *THE LAW OF LOPPIANO: Chiara Lubich addresses the inhabitants of Loppiano, putting into focus the real reason for the existence of Loppiano and renewing with all, the commitment to live this law to the fullest.*



6 *HOW LOPPIANO GREW AND VELOPED: Loppiano is sixteen y old now. This article covers som its history and development, illu ting also the different aspects of life there.*

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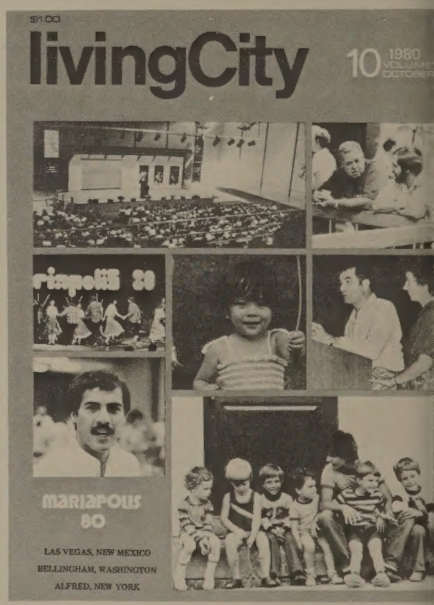

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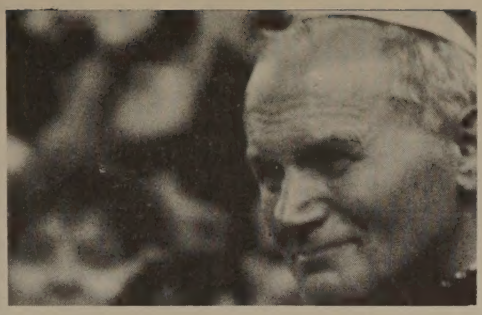

23 *Pope John Paul II has wanted to call attention to the importance of the Synod of Bishops which is presently being held in Rome.*

24 *ST. JUSTIN: in his search for truth among the many philosophies of his time, Justin found the answer to his questions in Christianity, in the doctrine proclaimed by the followers of Jesus of Nazareth.*

ONTENTS

Chiara Lubich	THE LAW OF LOPPIANO	2
Compiled by Guglielmo Boselli Rosanna Cantelmi Guiseppe Garagnani	HOW LOPPIANO GREW AND DEVELOPED	6
	MARIAPOLIS 1980	12
Matteo Silvi	THE STORY OF A LIFE	19
Pope John Paul II	PRAYER TO THE 1980 SYNOD OF BISHOPS	23
Silvano Cola	ST. JUSTIN: PHILOSOPHER AND MARTYR	24
Chiara Lubich	WORD OF LIFE	27

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THE LAW OF LOPPIANO

by CHIARA LUBICH

Loppiano is a little city built by the Focolare Movement near Florence, Italy. City is a big name for Loppiano. We could call it a "mini-city" because there are about 530 inhabitants. The reason that they are together is also, in a certain sense, to prove that unity is possible. Part of the city's inhabitants consists of those who prepare themselves to become Focolarini. There are, therefore, the two schools of formation for the young men and young women. There are also quite a large number of families who live there on a more or less permanent basis. Some of the volunteers have moved there and they take care in the greatest part of the farming land there. Then there are priests, and a small convent of contemplative sisters. Loppiano is a model, we would say, of a world where the Gospel is lived, where mutual love is the law.

In June of this year, Chiara Lubich, foundress of the Focolare Movement, visited Loppiano. They were days of great activity and enthusiasm, and the comments of the inhabitants there revealed this. For example: "I had the impression that I was witnessing a re-foundation of the city. It was a historical moment.

The vision of a "city" whose law would be the commandment of mutual love was something that Chiara Lubich already had at the beginning of the Movement. This idea began to take concrete form sixteen years ago, at Loppiano.

The later developments of this small city will be considered later. Chiara's visit this past June marked an important step. She herself explained its goal in her first message: "Why are we all here together in this tiny city? Because the one who called us, Jesus, the most beautiful of the sons of man, the protagonist of history, wants us to follow him in this most modern, beautiful vocation, which is to pattern our lives on the life of the Most Holy Trinity. We want to do it all together here, in order to know how to live it later in the "Focolare" and nourish the society which surrounds us with the most ardent, divine life."

This has always been the vocation of Loppiano since it began. However, in the same way that there are moments of extraordinary graces for individuals, there are also for communities. The life at Loppiano, though simple, is made up of many different aspects. After this meeting with Chiara, it became clearer that they are not separate from one another, but all expressions of that law which Loppiano made its own, the law of mutual love.

We would like to cover here a few highlights of this visit, presenting at the same time the different aspects of the life at Loppiano. The decision to live this mutual love in a more committed way was expressed in a "pact" that all the citizens — the young people, Focolarini, priests, families, teachers, volunteers, those attending the two-week course of formation for married Focolarini, the members of the international bands and the sisters of the cloister — made together in an atmosphere of such deep unity that it is difficult to describe in words.

Following is the main talk which Chiara addressed to all the citizens of Loppiano on June 12th.

And here we are once more in Loppiano. Loppiano, in a certain sense, has a name now. It is well-known. Many people speak of this little town on the hillside. What do they say of Loppiano? Many different things. But the emphasis is put on the fact that here love is lived; that there is a light in the eyes of the people who live here; that you find spontaneous joy.

We can ask ourselves if Loppiano is living up to its vocation by showing this countenance.

To have an answer we have to go back and see what plan God has for Loppiano. We have to go back to the beginning, to its origins, to the definition of this little city.

The city of Loppiano is a "permanent Mariapolis," the first of the permanent Mariapolis. They were born from the desire of making stable and permanent, somewhere in the world, the extraordinary reality that the Mariapolis[1] is. It began in the Dolomite mountains of Italy and continues to repeat itself year after year all over the world.

Now, we know that there is only one law for the Mariapolis that are held every summer. It is a law that, if we live it well, would be enough to make a Mariapolis meaningful: the law is the new commandment of Jesus.

In the beginning, no talks were held during the Mariapolis. We met all together only for the celebration of Mass and for the recollection in the evening. The Mariapolis was a gathering where people came together for only one reason: putting into practice the new commandment of Jesus. You know that there was only one passport needed to enter the Mariapolis : love. You could enter the Mariapolis if you decided to love. And the Mariapolis in those years was called a valley of light.

Now in the summer Mariapolis we have talks, sharing groups, we project films, and we have Mariapolis fests.

And also in the permanent Mariapolis — which have the task of making the reality of the temporary ones stable — we do many

Chiara Lubich addressing the citizens of Loppiano on June 12, 1980.

things: we study. pray work take tests, meet many people. . . .

Is this right? Are the summer Mariapolis and permanent Mariapolis in conformity with the plan that God had devised for them, or have they altered their function?

We must answer that all of the activities which are certainly a fruit of life — all the activities of the Mariapolis both temporary and permanent — have no meaning whatsoever unless they are all based on a common, sincere effort on the part of everyone to live mutual love, the new commandment of Jesus.

If this is so, everything is meaningful. If it is not so the Mariapolis is an absurdity.

Mutual love in reality is the law of the entire Focolare Movement. But in the Mariapolis there is the possibility of putting it into practice on a constant basis and on a vaster scale. All the people you meet here are candidates for this mutual love. Each one must be ready to give his or her life for you. And each one demands of you to be ready to love with that extreme measure of love.

From the very beginning of the Movement, we have often used the example of the immigrant. An immigrant is a person who moves to a new country bringing with him or her, his own language, customs and practices. Using this comparison we said that Jesus came on earth and brought with him the life of the Trinity.[2] This comparison can easily be applied to the permanent Mariapolis.

Jesus wants one thing above all here: that each one of us lives here as those in heaven live, that we live the life of God. This is the only thing we have to do. Everything else must be given up in order to do this.

What should we deduct from this? We have to understand that here it is necessary for us to acquire a deeper awareness of what mutual love entails. And for some this might mean a conversion.

We must put aside every desire of our heart. Do you love your studies? Do you love art, your work, or sports? Do you love the little chores of the Mariapolis? Remember that you did not come here to do these things.

What God wants here above all is a blaze of love. And each one must offer him or herself as fuel for this fire.

If we do this, if we are ready to make ourselves one all the way to being ready to give our lives out of love for the other, then we will do the will of God. And only if we do the will of God can we say that God is our ideal. Otherwise it is not so. There is no other way.

I am sure that all the citizens of Loppiano, old or young, one day made this choice. You put aside the idols of your heart in order to leave all the room for God, your whole heart for him. Now Jesus is asking all of you to repeat to him this act of necessary generosity in order to be followers of Jesus and worthy to live in the permanent Mariapolis.

We said that the permanent Mariapolis came to life so that the new commandment could be lived here, but it is also true that in this little city there is a school of formation for those who are called to work full-time for the kingdom of God: the school of the Focolarini.

It is for this reason that the spirituality of the Movement, the words of God which constitute it, are explained here in such a way that they may remain in their souls like a brand of fire.

But who can do this? What can make what God has said shine through with a very new light that can strike and touch all these hearts?

The answer is very obvious, and even the smallest, the youngest among you could answer me. Certainly it is not going to be knowledge, even the most enlightened knowledge to do this, but Jesus in our midst — Jesus who can be present in our midst when there is mutual love; that Jesus who — we reaffirm it also today — is the only teacher in the Mariapolis.

The Focolarini learn here to get started on their way toward sanctity, to which we all are called. Reaching perfection, in fact, cannot be someone's hobby. God wants it. It is God calling us to sanctity.

But what is sanctity? Sanctity is nothing else but love for God. What is the best way, the easiest way to fulfill it, if not loving Jesus in every person we meet? Isn't this our way to become directly united with God? In fact, we know that the more charity grows towards our neighbor, the more we put ourselves at the service of others, then the more we become rooted in God, in an always deeper union with him.

It is only in this atmosphere of mutual love, only in this way, that the future Focolarini can be prepared for the life that is awaiting them.

The Focolare must be a Focolare, that is, love which is burning. No other rule, in fact, will be at the basis of their lives, if not that of generating and maintaining the presence of Jesus always among them. And this can be obtained only through mutual love.

Even the "flights" that they will have to take in order to detach themselves from people, things and from themselves — and here we are talking about the traditional vows of the Church which the Movement has assumed, seeing them in the light of its spirituality — will have no meaning unless they are based on mutual love.

The fourth commitment[3] then, which means to be totally detached from our own life, to be ready to give it out of love for our neighbors, is nothing else than this commandment of Our Lord taken in its most radical sense.

If we maintain this atmosphere of love, the Focolarini will have the light to carry ahead this revolution of love which has already started all over the world.

There are already more than a million people who live this spirituality (and this is already something if the Pope, when he heard it, said, "But you are a people!"). Tomorrow, we hope, it will grow beyond every human perspective. We have to work always more decisively toward "that all may be one "

But how can we do it? Foco[4] once wrote: "The Focolarini must be people who are carriers of fire, of that fire which is love, and they can do that if they start by loving one another. In the measure that they do this, they will be able to change the world around them. The Focolare Centers must be like active volcanoes in the midst of glaciers."

"My wish is that this little city on the mountain top may acquire for itself the name that Augustine gave to the Church, the name that the Movement would like to call its own: it will be, it must be, it will be called – Charity."

It is in this atmosphere that Jesus will send us all the ideas on how to cultivate the life that springs forth in those that he entrusts to us.

In fact, we don't have special projects. No. Our work is the conversion of the world. It is to do as Mary did — to win the hearts of men and women to Christ.

The potential being of the Focolarini is to become mothers and fathers of souls. Did you ever see a mother forgetting her children when they are far away? How can we gather together ideas to nourish the life in those who will find this light? Who will suggest to us the thousand means to cultivate them; keep in touch with them, in order to bring about in each one the fulfillment of the will of God in them?

It is only Jesus who can do it — Jesus among us if we love one another.

And also in this climate of mutual love you will see that vocations become mature, solid, clear, because it is God who calls you. And his voice is much stronger wherever he is present because of mutual love.

So at this point, what should I tell Loppiano? Which kind of encouragement should I give you today? Which idea can I share with you among the many that we have?

I will repeat to you what St. John used to repeat when he was old to the first Christian communities, when they asked him about Jesus' teaching: "And this is his commandment, that we should love one another." (1 Jn. 3:23)

The advice that I would like to give Loppiano, so that it may shine in its splendid vocation, is the following.

First, I would suggest that we commit ourselves before God with a "pact." This is not something extra, added to our vocation. It is exactly what we have to do.

Like the first Focolarine made a pact of mutual love at the very beginning of the Movement, to love one another as Jesus has loved us, you here too, as citizens of Loppiano, should declare your love to Jesus in a solemn way; to tell him all together of your decision to put his commandment into practice.

Do you agree? Are we all ready?

If this is so, then we will have to choose a day, and during a Mass that will be celebrated for this occasion we will put together our proposal. We will seal it with Jesus and make mutual love the law of this city.

Love then will circulate much more than before. And we will place mutual love over and above everything we do, our work, any of our duties. Love will become our nature. We will really be "fire."

If we want love to go ahead without interruptions or detours, we must give our pact of mutual love also another meaning. We must call it also a "pact of mercy." Every morning when we awake we want to ask God to make us forget anything that was negative that we saw in our neighbors the day before, because we want to see one another brand new, more lovable, and therefore, more worthy of our love.

Mutual love will also start a much more complete communion of goods, especially material possessions. I know that in Loppiano we are poor. But it is not what we possess that makes the difference. It is being attached to what we have that is serious. Everything must circulate, in accordance with each one's vocation, and helped by those who are here in positions of responsibility. Even the needs of each one must be communicated.

Every citizen of Loppiano must be like a flower — and like flowers, each one different from the other — that absorbs from the earth, just that much water, and that much nourishment which it needs in order to live in order to be itself. We will do the same — absorb only what we need in order to let Jesus live in us.

Also our spiritual possessions must be shared: our experiences, the beautiful ideas that we might have, inspirations, the new understandings of the things of God. It is not enough to use only the time set aside for this. It is necessary to fill our day with this sharing, so that we can also be certain as Paul says — that we ". . . seek the things that are above." (Col. 3:1).

We must also see to it that all the experiences of the word of life circulate much more. Jesus is truth and he has sown truth in the world through his words, his words which are life.

If we assimilate them and we nourish ourselves with them, if we help one another to live them, we will see with surprise that we will become more authentic as persons. Not only this; but since every word of Jesus is love, each word will make our charity grow. Every word of God will become like a fire falling on fire.

If we share everything in this way, we will learn the great art which is very new, that the world does not know: the art of going to sanctity together. Christ, the saint, will be in our midst. And he will be in each one of us.

With this full sharing, putting into practice mutual love, we will reach the point of becoming one soul, one mind, so that each one in the community will have that soul, that mind, that heart, the heart of the community which is the heart of Christ. He will think in us, he will act and organize through us the spreading of the kingdom of God.

But there is one more thing that we have to put into practice from today on in Loppiano. In every Focolare, in every family, in every group of volunteers, with the Gen, everywhere, wherever there is mutual love, we must also put into practice the "moment of truth," which is mutual admonition and mutual encouragement in order to make the goals we have reached solid.

We cannot go to sanctity together sharing only the beautiful

things that we have acquired spiritually, but also helping one another, correcting one another with great love, so that we can get rid of all the bad habits and defects and, above all, develop what is good that we see in the others.

If this pact of mutual love will lead us to these results, Loppiano will take a gigantic step ahead. But not only that. My wish is that this little city on the mountain top may acquire for itself the name that Augustine gave to the Church, the name that the Movement would like to call its own: it will be, it must be, it will be called: Charity.

For what could be more beautiful than this for a city in the Work of Mary[5] whose members are called to be perfect in charity?

What could be more useful to the Church of today if Pope Paul VI said that charity is the principle virtue requested by the Church at this time in the world?

And so let me conclude by repeating to Loppiano the words that Pope John Paul II directed to the youth of France on June lst. The Pope said: "Meditate on Jesus' last words: 'A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends.' (Jn. 15:13) Jesus did not come to condemn love, but to free love from misunderstanding. Youth of France (and we could say, Citizens of Loppiano) it is more than ever the time to work hand in hand to build the civilization of love, in accordance with the expression which was so dear to my great predecessor Pope Paul VI. What a gigantic workshop we have in front of us! What a project that can fill us with enthusiasm!" ●

1) The Mariapolis is the summer gathering of the Focolare Movement.
2) "When the Word of God became man, he certainly adapted himself to the manner of life of this world. . . . But he also brought with him the manner of life of his own homeland in heaven, for he desired that men and things should be constituted in a new order, according to the law of heaven, the law of love." Chiara Lubich, "That All Men Be One," (New York:New City Press, 1969), p. 47.
3) This is the commitment to live mutual love expressed through a "pact" which is printed here to the right.
4) Igino Giordani, Foco, was one of the key figures in the birth and development of the Focolare Movement. See "Living City." Vol. 19, no. 7.
5) The Focolare Movement is also known as the "Work of Mary."

the law of loppiano

The following day, all the inhabitants of Loppiano met again to celebrate Mass together and to seal the commitment to mutual love with a "pact." Some of those present shared their immediate impressions: "This pact has worked the miracle of bringing all our hearts together as one . . . Everything is as it was before, and yet everything has changed." "I experienced a deep joy when we signed the pact of mutual love . . . But I asked myself also what I could do to make it to really live this pact with each one and not let it get watered down with time. Then I understood. To be ready to give my life means being ready to embrace all the sufferings and difficulties that may come during the day, without every stopping to think of myself. In this way, I will remain faithful to this pact and also help the others to do the same."

THE PACT

Jesus, today is the feast of your love because it is the feast of your heart. What can we give you today as a gift? We know that from your most Sacred Heart one day, on the first Holy Thursday of our history a desire was expressed. It was more than a desire; it was a commandment: "Love one another just as I have loved you." (Jn. 15:12). With your grace then, with charity which the Holy Spirit has poured into our small hearts, we want to promise you that we will make of your commandment the law of this city. For this reason, we commit ourselves to love one another as you have loved us. And to make this love concrete, we promise that we will share our possessions in accordance with our vocation, in a sharing of both material and spiritual possessions; that we will help one another in truth, through mutual admonition and mutual encouragement on every Friday of our life in remembrance of this day. Jesus, you who said: "Fire, I have come to bring on earth. . ." enkindle this fire in our souls and in our city. Yes, Jesus, we want to be a vulcano of love, and nothing else, a blaze that may enkindle your fire in as many souls as possible. We remain here enclosed in your heart enveloped by the love of Mary.

how loppiano grew and developed

Following is an interview with Renata Borlone and Father Alfredo Zirondoli, who are the directors of Loppiano. They have answered a few questions regarding the story of Loppiano.

A panoramic view of Loppiano showing some of the buildings and prefabricated houses.

Question: Sixteen years have gone by since the birth of the small international city of Loppiano. What was the significance of the meeting which the citizens there had last June with the foundress of the Focolare Movement?

Renata Borlone: That meeting brought about a deep change in our lives on both a personal and a collective level. It represented a strong call for us to be faithful to God's plan for this city. And in addition, it was a meeting marked by a very intense charity; it had all the characteristic love and joy of a family gathering.

Alfredo Zirondoli: Throughout these years Chiara Lubich has come to Loppiano several times and each of her visits brought about new developments in the city. This time, (bearing in mind our 16 years of experience here) she called attention once again — in a new and up-to-date way — to the reason for the existence of this city: that is to say, the need to give a Christian witness, a witness of people who live the new commandment of Jesus. In the beginning, this witness was given by a small group who were the members of the two international schools of formation of the Focolare Movement. But it later grew to include the many people who now live at Loppiano and who represent the most varied ways of life. They are family members, teachers, farm workers, laborers, religious, young people, and so on.

In the last few years, there have been many new developments in the various activities of this city, from the workshops of Centro Ave and Centro Azur, to the agricultural cooperative "Loppiano Prima," from the international singing groups, Gen Rosso and Gen Verde, to a cloistered convent. Meanwhile, the city has continued to be a focal point for hundreds and sometimes thousands of people who come up here on Sundays, attracted by our way of life. New facilities have been constructed for them as well, among them a large auditorium (formerly a workshop) dedicated to St. Benedict, which has become the heart of the city.

Chiara's visit gave us a new impetus to focus on the essential reason for which this "city" exists, the reason which gives all of these activities meaning, as different expressions of one and the same life. And we declared what this life must be with a solemn and explicit "pact" made by all of the inhabitants.

○

Question: Would you tell us something about the history of this city?

Alfredo: In 1964, the students of the two international schools of the Focolare Movement (as I mentioned earlier) came here to live on a plot of land donated by a focolarino, Vincenzo Folonari. At that time, there were not nearly as many students as there are today, but

they were the first "seeds" of this city. Their professors arrived with them, and then those who built the college and the roads. Some of these workers remained here and brought their families with them. Then a convent of contemplative sisters was established at Loppiano. In the meantime, the first agricultural endeavors and workshops were also starting up.

In 1968, commenting on these developments, Chiara confirmed that an idea she had had for many years was truly coming to life here — it was that of a miniature city which could be seen by everyone, and which would be an example of a Christian life lived by many people all together.

She established a small body of people who would be responsible for managing the different aspects of life in Loppiano: its spiritual aspects, work, schooling, the economy of the city, accommodations, transportation, communications, the welcoming of visitors, etc.

In the last few years these structures have been strengthened. The different activities here have taken shape and are becoming always better defined; the agricultural cooperative has doubled the area of land being cultivated; each of the activities has produced a core group of workers who have a high level of competence in that particular field. In this way, a functional body of people has been strengthened. Now, with this meeting with Chiara they received the finishing touch: the touch of unity among all.

○

Question: During her visit, Chiara Lubich named St. Bernard of Chiaravalle as the protector of Loppiano. What did she want this to signify?

PRAYER LIFE

The meeting with Jesus in the Eucharist is the highpoint of the day in the life of the inhabitants of Loppiano. It is the source of that unity which they then try to build with one another. They also find other moments during the day for meditation and prayer when they put in focus their relationship with God. There is also a convent of contemplative sisters, whose presence in the city underlines how fundamental this aspect is in a Christian life.

Alfredo: St. Bernard founded many famous abbeys in which he laid down a fundamental law for the monks to follow. It was the law of mutual love. In addition, Chiaravalle was a place where people came to be formed. The great abbeys of that time were centers of life in which the whole community — monks, peasants, families — lived Christianity. As St. Bernard used to say, it was a life of giving God to everyone and bringing everyone to God. The abbeys had an olive-press for producing oil, and a windmill, and they carried out all the agricultural activities of that time.

Now for us in modern times, there are different kinds of work to be done, however, the essence remains exactly the same: a life based on God. For some this will mean an explicitly religious way of life, but for all the way of life must be Christian: a Christian way of working, studying, living in the family; Christian relationships among the different groups and in carrying out the different activities; sharing among all.

In her message to Loppiano, Chiara made us see more clearly this reality that we are a single family, notwithstanding the differences in vocation and particular functions: religious and laity, Focolarino and Gen. . . .

Renata: Just as the great abbeys of that time wished to transmit the light of Christ to the world and did so by identifying with the social situation and concrete needs of their own age, in the same way the

THE FOCOLARE

Those attending the two schools of formation for the Focolarini live in small groups which are called "Focolare." Chiara had said: "The Focolare must be a hearth: burning love. In fact, no other norm will be at the basis of the life of the Focolarini if not that of generating and maintaining Christ's presence among them. And they accomplish this through mutual love." These small groups become a focal point in the life of these young people, a place where they can meet and share the experiences and difficulties of the day. "Every time I climb the stairs to this house, I try to remember that I only have one right: that of being the first to love."

WORK

Every person and every thing which one encounters in this city seems to say that at Loppiano, everything is life. And the first manifestation of this life is expressed by the work which is carried out intensely in every corner of the city. Almost everything here, even the houses and the roads, has been built by hand by the citizens of Loppiano. And since the city is continually expanding, the work is still going on. Nevertheless, the first phase of constructing buildings in the city was soon followed by another phase which has been characterized by work at the various regular activities which have been established here — handicrafts for the most part, but also agricultural work, various services, and maintenance, etc. — through which each citizen is able to provide for his or her own upkeep and the primary needs of the community.

Mariapolis of Loppiano wants to transmit the light of Christ to the world today. Through mutual love which manifests itself in working relationships, personal contacts, the life of study and prayer, and the use of modern means of communication. And it does so in accordance with an outlook on life more suited to our own times.

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Question: But isn't there a danger that Loppiano may become a "happy island," protected and estranged from the world of today, in which Christians are asked to bear a witness which is anything but easy?

Renata: Anyone familiar with Loppiano knows how far this idea of a "happy island" is from the reality of our life. For the 400 Focolarini at the international schools the experience of Loppiano lasts only two years. It serves to show them what a society could be like if everyone in it lived the Gospel. The other people who live here permanently are very much a part of the social situation which surrounds them: our laborers and farm workers run up against and deal with the problems that everyone faces on a daily basis; the children attend the public schools.

Alfredo: In order for the young people who attend these international schools to be in a position to live the ideals which they learn here for the rest of their lives, it's necessary that they have, not a period of isolation, but, rather, a period of concentration. It is only when one has experienced that a certain kind of communitarian life is possible that he or she is in a position to carry it out. For example, if someone experiences that work can be done in an atmosphere of mutual love, he or she will then be able to believe in this possibility later on as well. For instance, here one learns that every kind of work is valuable, (not only that in which one is specialized) so long as it is done with love. One also experiences that it is possible to get along with every kind of person and with all races. There are Americans, Asians, Europeans, and Africans here . . .

Furthermore, every Sunday hundreds of people come here to Loppiano bringing with them problems of all kinds, both spiritual and material. There are people going through a crisis in their lives and so on. Those who live here don't wear blindfolds for two years, but it is precisely the concentration they can achieve here which renders them capable of helping the others.

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Question: This "permanent Mariapolis" is called Mariapolis Aurelia. How did it get this name?

Alfredo: Aurelio was a young man who lived at Loppiano and worked to build this little city both materially — by laying roads, initiating an activity that later provided jobs for the young people, and developing relationships with people living outside the city — and spiritually, by giving an exemplary witness. He was a model for the kind of person that all the citizens of this city must be — always loving, always giving — right up to the moment his life was cut short by an accident.

Aurelio was the first inhabitant of Loppiano to be buried in the cemetery near the ancient church of St. Vito. And since he was the first, the city was named after him.

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Question: What meaning does the fact have for you that several friends of the Movement, who have died during these years, are buried in the cemetery here in Loppiano? What is meant by the expression you use, "the heavenly Mariapolis"?

Alfredo: The small cemetery here at Loppiano has become a place where we often stop while taking a walk. It is an opportunity for us to remember in a special way those

who have passed on. They are present with us even though they are now in a different state of life. We remember their words and example and also share with others the impact that their lives have had on us. We speak of them as people who have moved on to another region — the "heavenly Mariapolis."

The little children who are born here and grow up in this city understand these things even better than all the rest of us. In their eyes, death is not something terrible. They go to the cemetery normally, often bringing flowers. For them, death is an important part of life, one which signifies a change, but not a separation.

All of this is serene and joyful; it is part of Loppiano's very essence. The moment for accompanying someone to the cemetery is a moment of unity for the whole city: one of us is moving on; it is an occasion to celebrate.

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Question: Regarding formation in the faith, what contribution does Loppiano intend to give to this?

Renata: The way of life in Loppiano takes in the whole person. It involves the mind and one's whole being, and helps people become accustomed to living according to the Gospel. Living like this enhances one's faith and faith leads to a discovery of Jesus and his doctrine. "He who lives the truth comes to the light." It's not a matter of starting at the bottom and working one's way up. Instead, we start off with a knowledge of Jesus (which is acquired above all by living) and move on to learn all the other things which then acquire a new light. If not, we would wind up with an intellectualism, theology pursued for its own sake, sociology pursued for its own sake, and so on.

Alfredo: It is in this spirit that those in the international schools study Theology, Ethics, The Old and New Testaments, the teachings of the Church, Ecumenism, the spirituality of the Focolare Movement, Sociology.

This is because all these students, coming from so many different backgrounds, must know what is necessary to live in today's world, in the Church of today, so that they can be well-informed Christians. But it is a course of study quite openly related to life; it itself is life. It is important to realize that at Loppiano everything — not just school — contributes to one's formation. Work too, for instance, is a means of formation. You work with the others and for the others; even work on an assembly line which is, humanly speaking, very alienating, becomes a way of serving the others: each person tries to do his or her part in the best way possible so that the next person who gets the item will find it all ready to be further developed. Everything is done as an act of love.

Relationships with other people are a means of formation too —with those who come to observe the work or visit the city. Even the games are a means of formation because they require collaboration; they teach us how to rejoice for the success of the others just as for our own. Respect for nature, which we try to care for, is also a means of formation. The city itself with all its aspects — liturgical life, prayer, community life in small groups — also contributes to one's formation. And the sharing among the various cultures is a kind of formation too: it forms a new kind of person who is born from the reciprocal gifts of all that each one is. And the communication to all the citizens of Loppiano about what is happening in the city,

WHATEVER IS NEEDED FROM MOMENT TO MOMENT

Christine Marie, a young French doctor whom I met in the kitchen, standing before a large pressure cooker, granted me an interview of a certain kind: she tore a few sheets from a pad of paper and put them in my hand. They were opinions, thoughts and notations jotted down without any apparent connection, yet they fit in perfectly with the logic of all that was going on around us.

"To be ready to do anything at any moment: to work in the kitchen peeling carrots, keeping an eye on what is baking in the ovens. To plan very well just what work I have to do and then all of a sudden have to drop everything in order to go and do something else — a translation, or perhaps accompanying someone on a tour of Loppiano. And then return to the kitchen to prepare many pounds of beef for cooking and finish only in time to start a new task in another kitchen outside of Loppiano where we are giving shelter to Vietnamese refugees for a period of time. To assist someone in the hospital, and then once again return to the kitchen. . .

"Only what God asks of us matters. We have only one right, that of loving,and one can be certain that of all the things we do, only those which were imbued with charity will remain.

"It is beautiful to note that even though it is our law of life, one is always surprised by the love received here: that cup of coffee offered during the break at school when you don't expect it, because you realize how much love has been mixed in with it. Or that regularly recurring competition among us to secure for oneself the most burdensome job during the summer, such as staying by the ovens or the pressure cookers.

"I knew that love is universal but it is beautiful to experience it when it's most difficult. Then it shows up in the richness of our relationships with one another, expecially owing to our internationality. To love, which means to respect the other's mentality also in the way we greet one another, the way we laugh . .. But this exercise opens wide the mind and heart and makes the world your own; it makes the other person's family your own, etc. Everything helps us to reach what is essential ana the different circumstances are like the excuse for an adventure, one lived with God while remaining among men."

THE AGRICULTURE COOPERATIVE

The land around Loppiano is cultivated by members of an agricultural cooperative. We asked Robert Cardinali, one of the cooperative's organizers, how this came about.

"The idea of starting a cooperative," he told us, "came as an answer to a need which we felt deeply. We wanted to experience a kind of community life that would permit us to live the Gospel within structures which already exist, in other words, those offered by society. We chose the form of a cooperative because within it the relationships among persons take priority over the relationship between people and capital, and because in a cooperative each individual has a value regardless of his or her economic contribution or personal talents.

"Why at Loppiano? Soon after the cooperative was established as one which would pursue various activities, there arose an opportunity for us to cultivate this land. This is why the first accomplishment of the cooperative was a water conduit system along with the opening of a workshop providing mechanical maintenance. In the beginning, the work of the cooperative took on two forms: the ducting of water and a machine shop to keep our equipment in working order, and a food-producing cooperative which employs the majority of the members, who today number more than 2,000 Europeans, and persons from other continents. It is the latter, above all, who with their contributions have given us the opportunity to begin and develop this work. They've given us both low-interest loans and outright donations. In addition, their contributions have enabled us to expand the work of the cooperative and to acquire more land. Nothing is done for personal gain; on the contrary, this represents a kind of communion of goods which we Volunteers of the Focolare Movement have put into practice. However, the cooperative is economically independent.

"The associate member-workers live at Loppiano. They are about ten families who derive their principal means of livelihood from working on the land — about 500 acres, part of which is owned and part rented..

"Another interesting aspect of the cooperative is that just in order to experience this community life, members come from all over Italy, and from other countries as well, to help with the grape-gathering. They stay here to work with us during the harvest and then return occasionally during the year whenever they have some free time.

"On the occasion of one of her first visits, Chiara gave a particular character to our cooperative. She proposed to us then a sentence from the Gospel which would serve as our guideline: 'Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, and everything else will be given you besides' (Lk. 12:31). Even amidst all the difficulties which you can well imagine in these past few years which were certainly not the best for the agricultural business, these words gave us the strength to always start all over again. When she gave us this word of life we already had understood what was meant by those words, 'the kingdom of God,' because we were experiencing it, because of the love among us."

STUDIES

There is also a school at Loppiano. A school in the strictest sense of the word — two years of Theology and Sociology which are taught by a group of professors to about 400 students coming from all five continents. These students return after these two years to give their contribution to the life of the communities of the Movement in the world. Therefore, there are lessons, group study periods, and exams taken by each group at the end of the semester.

But what is the main characteristic of this school? The teachers say that their instruction has to be a gift, a service: 'And in this way, study becomes a part of life," explains Marisa Cerini. "It solves problems; it answers all those questions which have accumulated in our minds but, which were never expressly stated; it inwardly enlightens not only the mind, but one's whole being."

For the students, this type of schooling is new. "It is a unique experience," comments one young woman who attends the school, "because it is not in any way cut off from the rest of our life. I always feel a need to implement and apply what I've learned in the lessons during the day and at work. And our studying together is very useful. It allows us to compare ideas and knowledge but even more, I would say, to compare the very way in which we understand things since quite often, the other members of the group have very different cultures and mentalities. And since mutual love is at the basis of all our study groups, it creates a strong atmosphere of mutual understanding and help among all. It leads us to discover the truth contained in all the subject matter and to overcome any difficulties we might have with it."

in the Movement, in the Church and in the world, about political and international events, sports, etc. is also a kind of formation. In short, Loppiano is a 24 hour-a-day school.

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Question: What continues to surprise you most about this city, you who have lived here for a long time?

Alfredo: It is always surprising to see the continual relevance of the Gospel, its constant newness, its ability to fascinate young people. We too who have been here for many years and who continually see this beauty, experience this fascination of living a "new" reality — the life of the Gospel, which unifies everything we do.

Usually, life is all broken up — there is a time for working, a time for study, a time for relaxation, a time to eat — here everything is unified in one life which is expressed through working, studying, recreation, etc. And it is

not the life of an individual, but of a body. This can be seen everywhere: it is a body made up of many members who all give the same witness.

Renata: It is always astonishing to see the vitality of Christianity which unites people of the most varied races, cultures and mentalities. Every day we witness the miracle of unity, the fact that no one wants to turn back. And there is no nostalgia for all that one may have left behind. This is a sign that there is something here, an extraordinary ideal which attracts everyone.

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Question: Is this also what attracts the hundreds of people who come up here on Sundays?

Renata: Yes, I think they are attracted by the Christianity we strive to live here, and by our mutual love. People say, "Look how they love one another." Some find faith in God because they meet him here; they feel his presence. I recall something which happened recently. There was an engineer who had purchased a farm house nearby. He was seventy years old, and had always been far from the faith. Being so close by, he began coming to visit Loppiano. Not too long ago he wrote us a beautiful letter saying that he believes now. He has made his first Holy Communion."

Alberto: This presence of the divine affects everyone, even if not all of them are aware of it. Children, who come for the first time in particular, make spontaneous remarks which are quite striking. They say, "Today I understood what love is; I had some doubts, but now I believe."

Ecumenical groups also come here. Since we speak of God, of Jesus and of love, they never feel alienated, and they say this. Also non-Christians, the Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus feel at ease. Some of them told us, "Although we were thousands of miles from home in a completely different environment, even externally — the houses were different, everything was different — still, we felt at home."

Compiled by Guglielmo Boselli, Rosanna Cantelmi, and Giuseppe Garagnani.

THE FAMILIES

There are fifteen families living in Loppiano. Tino and Agnes, who were the first to move here, told us about the beginnings: "Sixteen years ago, apart from the two school buildings, there were no other houses here in Loppiano — only old buildings, haylofts and abandoned hen coops. Yet after spending one summer here camping out the best we could, we remained here permanently. Tino, who is a construction worker, was able to help out in constructing the first building of the city."

SUNDAYS

Each Sunday, Loppiano opens its doors to hundreds of visitors. This year alone, about 35,000 people passed through here. Among these, there were 6,000 children. A program different from that for the adults is prepared for them each week. It includes songs, games, slide presentations, skits on the parables, or experiences of life taken from the Gospel. The children take an active part in these.

At the end of the day, many write their impressions. For example, "I never believed that there existed such a beautiful town founded on love," wrote a boy of 13, "because I almost didn't believe that love existed anymore. Up until now I've lived amidst violence and I didn't know that love could unite people of such different races. I liked it a lot here."

"For me, today has been a joyful encounter with God," commented another boy, ten years old."

And a girl of 11 wrote, "For me, today was a day in which I found myself again. I see and I feel that it is easy to love. It's enough for me to remember Jesus' words each time."

MARIAPOLIS 1980
charity, love as the aim of our life

Three Mariapolises were held again this year in North America – one in Las Vegas. New Mexico; one in Bellingham, Washington State; and the third in Alfred, New York. We are printing here the experience of Vernon Bremberg who participated in the Mariapolis for the first time this year.

A view of the auditorium of Alfred University, where the East Coast Mariapolis was held.

My wife, Rebecca, my son, Andrew (18 months) and I attended the 1980 Mariapolis at Alfred, New York, August 3rd to August 9th. This was our first in-depth exposure to the Focolare Movement and our first Mariapolis. Chiara Lubich has already written a book on the talks, "When Our Love is Charity," so, rather than comment on them, therefore, I'll share experiences I had "between the talks."

How I Met the Focolare Movement

Last October my sister-in-law, who was studying theology in Rome, came to visit us in New York at the same time Pope John Paul II came to the United States. She knew several people in Rome who are in the Focolare Movement, and so she and my wife visited one of the New York centers to relay greetings. The next thing I knew, my wife had invited some women from out-of-town to share our home while they were here to see the Pope. I never did really figure out just who or what Focolare was, but the people seemed very nice and they even gave me a ticket to see the Pope. I thought that was the last I would hear of them, but shortly after, we were invited to a pot-luck dinner. I ended up subscribing to *Living City* magazine and buying some books.

At this point, I still could not figure out what this Focolare was all about. Next, we made a pilgrimage to Rome for Holy Week and met the women (Focolarini and Volunteers) who knew my sister-in-law. They also gave us some tickets to see the Pope. So far, I had formed two conclusions about people in the movement: they were very generous and they liked the Pope.

When I read in *Living City* about the Mariapolis, I knew that we had to go, if for no other reason than

to figure out just who these Focolare were and what they were up to. We signed up immediately. A few weeks later we were invited to attend a New Family picnic and it was so nice that I was really glad we were going to the Mariapolis for a whole week of this kind of fun.

Enter by the Narrow Door

We arrived at the Mariapolis, after a six-hour bus ride that was an hour late in leaving. I was ready to rest and begin my vacation. I had never spoken to anyone about the schedule, but I assumed maybe a couple of hours of talks each morning and the rest of the day for picnics, games, walks and rest. When we registered and I looked at the schedule that began at 9 in the morning and ran until 10:30 at night — and implied that we would leave our baby in a nursery off-and-on for most of the day — I started complaining to my wife. I said that we would review the schedule and decide which programs to attend and which to skip. She was as upset as I was, but reminded me that we were here to help create a spirit of unity with those around us and that making up our own schedule was not exactly a good start. As we went to bed that first night, I realized that part of God's plan to get me here had been to make sure that I hadn't seen a schedule before coming and that I came on a chartered bus so that I couldn't leave easily. My peaceful sleep was interrupted at 1:30 A.M. when my wife woke me up. She was worried about the schedule and having to leave the baby for hours at a time "with strangers." By this time I could share my conviction that God wanted us here (I still did not know why) and that, if we submitted to his will and put our trust in him, all would be well. She was reassured and went to sleep peacefully. For me, the decision to set aside my concerns, to look for God's will and open myself to his plan, was a way of living August's Word of Life — "Try your best to enter by the narrow door, because, I tell you, many will try to enter and will not succeed" (Luke 13:24).

My First "Experience"

By Wednesday, half-way through the Mariapolis, I had been greeted by so many smiling faces and been loved by so many people who saw Jesus in me that I figured that I was ready to try it out for myself. During one conference break, I said to myself, "O.K., I'm ready to meet someone who needs love through me." But I still wasn't ready to just walk up to someone and begin smiling and talking. So, I went outside and laid down on the grass, alone, thinking, "If I'm really ready, God will send someone to me." I began to prepare myself to receive Jesus. Sure enough, in a few minutes a pleasant grandmother from the Midwest came over and sat down beside me. We exchanged a few words about the weather and subways and when she allowed me to ask the first question about her, I knew that Jesus had sent her for me to love. After a few minutes, I learned that her real concern was for her daughter and son-in-law who lived on the West Coast. I could see that she missed her daughter very much and was unsure about her relationship with her son-in-law. She loved him because her daughter loved him, but he had taken her daughter (and now her grandchild) far away. She finally asked me: "How do you get along with your mother-in-law?" I had asked God to empty my thoughts from my mind and tell me what he wanted me to say. I shared with her how I had hurt my mother-in-law with an angry and thoughtless verbal outburst a few months after my wife and I were married. I learned later that her pain had been so great that she went to her priest for advice. The priest told her, "Pray that the Holy Spirit will come into your son-in-law's life and fill him with Jesus' love." After a week of this prayer, the pain that I had caused in her heart was gone. After a month of her prayer, I experienced a powerful religious conversion that changed my life forever. As I summed this up for her, I said, "Since you want more than anything for your daughter to be happy and to be in unity with her,, pray to the Holy Spirit for your son-in-law just as my mother-in-law did."

Life is a Continuous Experience

We shared an apartment for the week with a married Focolarina, her two daughters Age 4 and Age 6, and her son, Age 2½. Thursday morning at breakfast Colleen, who had her sixth birthday at the Mariapolis, said to me, "I've already had twelve experiences this morning." Somewhat incredulous, I asked her what they were. She related that her younger sister had been afraid and got in bed with her and, even though it was uncomfortable, she wouldn't be unkind to Jesus, so she let her stay. Her younger brother had grabbed some food off her plate and she thought that she wouldn't deny Jesus food, so did not grab it back. Her brother wanted her donut, and she thought it wouldn't be fair to everyone else, so she broke her donut into several pieces to give some to her brother, her sister, my wife, my son (Jesus in each of us around the table). She shared several more such simple experiences. This was a real breakthrough for me. I realized that I shouldn't go around looking for a "big" experience to talk about in the sharing group, but that every personal interaction all day long can and should be an experience of loving Jesus. Chiara, in her talks, explained charity and six-year-old Colleen showed me how to live it.

The Youngest "Experience"

Each morning and afternoon when we left our 18 month old son at the nursery, a loving woman would hold him in her arms and he would cry as we left. Of course, we always waited outside the door to see how long he cried and he always stopped within a minute or so and began playing. When we returned, he was always playing happily until he saw us when he would begin to cry until we picked him up. As the week went on, we began to spend time explaining that we missed him too, and knew he missed us and that it was O.K. to cry and that we would come back as soon as possible. He seemed to understand and even began to try to hold back his tears as we left. By Thursday afternoon, when we returned from a talk, he was sitting on the floor next to his new friend, Matthew, 15 months old, who was crying. Our Andrew had his hand in a box try-

(continued on page 16)

to love always

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DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF THE MARIAPOLIS:

1) More than 1100 children, young people and adults met in Alfred, New York for the East Coast Mariapolis. Despite the large number of participants, a strong unity was present from the beginning.
2),4),6) In each Mariapolis, an afternoon was dedicated to the presentation of the Gen Movement.
3),7) The intervals between the talks were moments for sharing.
5),10) The annual afternoon of games was a time of fun and, most of all, unity when all participants, young and old, competed in a simple, but challenging, series of games.
8) The Mariapolis Fest was the opportunity for many to put their talents at the service of the others — for songs, skits, comedies, props, etc. — for the enjoyment of all.
9) The New Family Seminar offered those interested the possibility of getting a closer look at the New Family Movement through talks and experiences.

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(continued from page 13)

ing to get out a cheese cracker. He glanced up as we entered and, to our surprise, not only didn't he cry, but continued at his task. Finally, Mommy reached down and got a cracker out of the box and handed it to him. He looked at it for a second and as we waited for him to take a bite, he handed it to the still-crying Matthew who then stopped crying! Andrew looked up at us, smiling, as if to say "I gave my cookie to Jesus so He wouldn't cry." We thanked God for our son, for his presence in him, and for all he teaches us through him.

The Hundredfold

It was Thursday night and my wife and I were up past midnight sharing our thoughts and feelings for the day. I said, "I think it's obvious that God is calling us into something deeper, something closer to him." She asked, almost too excited, "What do you mean?" I told her, "Well, for me, I know that I want to make a deeper commitment, and I feel that Jesus brought me to this Mariapolis because he wants me to somehow grow deeper in this spirituality of unity." She laughed and said, "This is my hundredfold: I feel God has called me to make a commitment to grow in the Focolare Movement, and I have said 'Yes!', but I was hesitant to tell you because I knew you had to answer your own call."

Live in the Present Moment

I woke up on Friday thanking God for the week and for his call to grow closer to him. As I prayed, I decided to ask Jesus a question. At that time, I still did not understand the different parts of the Focolare Movement very well, e.g., Married Focolarini, Volunteers, New Families, New Humanity, etc. All I knew was that Jesus was calling me deeper. So, expecting a specific answer from these categories, I asked, "Lord, what do you want me to be?" His answer was clear: "Be the first to love." It was both a confirmation of the call and a reminder to live in the present moment — what he wants is for me to love now and to trust in him to lead me to the right choice at the right time.

The high point of each day was the celebration of the Eucharist. One of the most striking moments at the East Coast Mariapolis was when, after the Liturgy of the Word, Father Blair Jenkins, Episcopalian priest, amid the applause of all, exchanged the sign of peace with the other priests and left with those belonging to non-Catholic Christian Churches to continue the Liturgy of the Eucharist in an adjacent chapel. This conveyed the reality of the separation which is a suffering but also put into evidence the desire for unity which in the Mariapolis became a certainty because of mutual love.

A Confirmation at Home

When we got home Saturday afternoon, we shared our week's experiences with three close friends. After dinner, we all prayed and then I read Ephesians 3:15-19. This passage took on a whole new meaning for me, and when I read and re-read verse 17, "May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith, and may charity be the root and foundation of your life." I knew that Jesus was telling me to follow the movement whose name is Charity (as Chiara describes itin one of her talks of this year's Mariapolis).

The First Day Back at Work

My relationships in the office where I work are reasonably good and, although there is plenty room for improvement, I didn't expect any sudden breakthroughs. On my first day back at work after the Mariapolis, I was waiting for an elevator when a man who works in another office on our floor also came to wait. I had seen him at the coffee cart and waiting at elevators for two years, and I had always been struck by his gruff, unfriendly attitude and had decided to ignore him. Today was different. Today I had promised to be the first to love. I commented on the weather and got a curt response. But this time, rather than backing off and giving up, I put on a bigger smile and in a warmer voice and genuine interest, asked him how he felt, commented more on the weather, asked him where he lived and how the rain or heat affected his home, etc. By the time the elevator arrived and took us to the main floor, he was smiling, too, and talking with enthusiasm. When I said, "Have a nice day!" he replied "You, too! It's been nice talking to you!" As I walked out of the building my smile was even bigger as I thought "Thank you, Jesus!"

What Next?

God has called our family to sanctity in unity. This is how he calls us all to himself — in unity. My first Mariapolis showed me how to grow closer with my family and with all people in his love and how to live this love each day. For now, all I know is that he wants me to live each present moment in his love. If I can learn to do that, always, I know that I will experience heaven on earth. Of course, I look forward to my second Mariapolis, but, I believe, that God wants me (as he wants all of us) to help build and live in a lifelong Mariapolis.

mariapolis 80 – impressions

"I feel that at this Mariapolis the peacefulness of God's love has covered all of us and created a family. When I first arrived and saw the 1100 people I said, 'It's too overwhelming. It's too much. It's going to be too big.' But a family was been created. We are one. There is unity here. And I feel that when we leave, we carry that family with us."

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"I see the Mariapolis as being a way of life which all mankind could hopefully achieve."

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"I came to the Mariapolis feeling myself far from God. In these days I have felt a change and an inner strength that I didn't have before. I have now asked Jesus to help me to find him because I have understood that he is the only one who can give me the peace I am searching for."

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"I have participated in many retreats and I came here to rest and to study. Now I feel myself rested without having rested, and filled with God's light without having studied. It was beautiful to see the genuine, profound love among all. Now I want to go back and share my experience by loving all."

□

"Everything that I've heard here has really touched me right to the heart. A lot of this I've known to be true for a long time but I had no idea how to put it into practice. Now I feel I've found a family that I can grow with and with whom I can love God more. I'm just really excited about what s beginning for me."

□

"I've learned that unless I love everyone, Christ within them, I'll never be at peace with myself."

□

"I came very tired and tense to the Mariapolis, but as soon as I arrived all the fatigue disappeared, and I could feel the presence of God and the love of everyone welcoming me. I leave as a new person."

□

"I sensed a freedom that I've never felt before: the freedom to really be myself."

Numerous religious, men and women, participated in the three Mariapolises.

It was an immense joy for the participants of the Northwest Mariapolis to receive the visit of Archbishop James Carney of Vancouver, B.C., Canada.

"This is the closest thing to heaven that I've ever experienced and that means that heaven can start here on earth. Maybe to clarify a little more what I mean: heaven to me in the past always seemed like something way up in the clouds or real far away, something you only experience when you die, but I think what the Mariapolis has shown me is that heaven can start right now in the present here on earth."

"This is my first Mariapolis and I wasn't really sure what to expect. Now that we are leaving. I can say that it felt like Christmas for a whole week in August. It really felt like home!"

(continued on following page)

IMPRESSIONS—MARIAPOLIS 1980

"This is my first experience of a Mariapolis. I was looking forward to it, but I never expected to find here the answer for which I've been searching. It gave me a greater awareness of the great unity among all of us: all walks of life, priests, sisters, laity of all descriptions. The Mariapolis takes you to another world. I just feel the atmosphere is so beautiful that you just can't help but think of the first Christians and how they lived together in a beautiful, harmonious way. And I'm just filled with joy."

□

Perhaps some of the readers may remember me. My name is Francesco and I'd like to tell you something about my experience while I was visiting here in America.

When I was in Rome, where I live, I dreamt about this trip— I thought about the skyscrapers that I would see, the airplanes I would take, and the people I would meet. I thought about everything, I guess except for one thing: the Mariapolis.

I had already been to two Mariapolises in Italy and I knew that I would be participating in two more here, but I really wasn't too interested.

I had a strange relationship with Jesus. I was certain that he existed because as a child I had had like a fire inside, which little by little, had died out. I became convinced that I was a terrible sinner and I figured that Jesus had already forgotten about me. (I'm only fifteen years old, can you imagine!) For me, the case was closed.

Yet, this situation made me suffer because I felt like a person who, having seen a way filled with light, saw all the other ways — politics, drugs, etc. — as filled with darkness. The only thing that consoled me was the fact that I had many friends who liked me. For this reason, I thought that perhaps the whole situation wasn't as bad as it seemed.

I went to the Mariapolis. I asked to be with the Gen 3 because I'm convinced that it's good for everyone to be with children once in a while. I felt myself surrounded by the love of many who were encouraging me to go ahead.

But when the participants of the Mariapolis began to arrive I immediately felt lost. They all spoke English and I couldn't undertand a word. But I didn't give up because I knew that we have to love the others with facts and not with words. So I started to give of myself to the others and I received the hundredfold. They all really liked me. Even though I was dead tired and really worried that something might happen to the Gen 3, at the same time I was extremely happy because they showed their affection for me through smiles and gestures.

One boy struck me in a particular way because I saw that he was able to attract everyone's attention. I really liked him and he also immediately tried to strike up a relationship with me. He played soccer really well and I tried as best I could (I've never been the athletic type). In this way, we became friends. But I couldn't understand a word he said and all I could say to him was "Yes." This made me suffer because I didn't think that loving him without being able to talk to him would bear any real fruit in his soul..

Later, when the moment came to say good-bye, he began to cry. There, I understood that love breaks down all barriers. We exchanged addresses and now we are going to write to each other.

During the Mariapolis I received the Eucharist every day. This gave me a real joy and freedom. I have to admit that every once in awhile I make the same mistakes again. But now I know that all I have to do is start again.

And now I'm leaving for Rome. I'm looking forward to meeting my family and friends again but this vacation has taught me one thing that is much higher and much more beautiful than the skyscrapers! God loves each one of us in a very personal way and he always forgives us. ●

Above: the Gen 3 and Gen 4 had their own programs, but they came to share their experiences. Here we see some of the Gen 3 girls during the East Coast Mariapolis.

Below: a group of over twenty persons came to Alfred from Puerto Rico.

THE STORY OF A LIFE

by MATTEO SILVAN

The following experience, given during the Northwest and the East Coast Mariapolises, was met with great enthusiasm. We are certain that our readers will be happy to know that the entire autobiography of Mr. Silvan, titled "Lazarus, Come Forth," will be published very soon by New City Press, New York.

Matteo Silvan as he told his experience during the East Coast Mariapolis.

Up to a few years ago my job was that of Inspector General with the Italian Treasury. All my life, therefore I was occupied with budgets, banking, stocks, etc. They are all very useful things but they have very little to do with the Gospel. I must admit that in this world I did attain a high economic and social position. Yet, I lived without great enthusiasm, without great suffering, without great joy. When I reached the age of 50 I felt as if my life was drawing to an end. I had everything — health, family, money but still I felt restless, dissatisfied. I felt deep inside that all that I had was temporary and the thought of death tormented me.

Then, one day someone knocked at my door. Two girls were looking for my elder daughter. She was not at home, and the visitors said they were sorry to have bothered me. They were about to leave when I stopped them. I had noticed that they were somewhat different from the other girls who used to come to our home. There was more life in their eyes and their smile was more beautiful. I invited them in and began to question them.

Their answers really surprised me. At a certain point I asked myself from what heaven they had fallen to earth. At first they told me they belonged to a community which drew its inspiration from the Gospel and I said to myself, "That's all right, there's nothing wrong with that." They told me then that they had understood that everything passes. I agreed, too. I felt the same.

"Their leader," they continued, "during the war had consecrated herself to God." At this point I began to look at them with suspicion. What connection could there be between bombs and God? I was even more shocked when they told me that God is love. How was it possible to speak of God who is love in the midst of the destruction of the war? I had gone to Mass every Sunday but I had never thought of God as love. On the other hand, where is love in the world? "It's true," they told me, "there is no love in the world but it is precisely for this reason that we have consecrated ourselves to God in order to bring love where there is no love." I was shocked. I asked myself, "How could they be so naive?" Yet they seemed completely convinced about what they were saying and so I tried to provoke them. At that time I was involved in social problems and I thought that I could try to trip them up by asking them questions about this topic. They answered me, however, with such candor that I became angry. They said that even problems of social injustice could be solved with love. It was necessary however that an always greater number of people, even at the cost of their lives, be ready to bring love where there is no love. After two hours of conversation I was completely disarmed. From their point of view everything was simple.

Everything was not only logical, but terribly logical. They were ready to go and I, in an attempt to feel better in my conscience, gave them all the money I had on me.

Then I forgot that meeting, but those two girls, those two Focolarine, I couldn't forget. I think it was the love of God that continued to persecute me.

After several months one of them invited me to a Mariapolis. It was 1955. I needed some rest and so I accepted. However, it was anything but rest that was awaiting me! Upon my arrival, a group of young people was there to meet me. They were smiling and they greeted me as if they had known me all my life. The details of what followed are perhaps unnecessary: it's true — in the Mariapolis one does not rest but finally I had found that for which I had been searching — life, yes, the real life.

The thought of death that had tormented me up to then disappeared. Everything I saw and heard spoke of the resurrection. It was not a resurrection that will come only at the end of time but one that can happen every day. They explained to me that he who renounces himself out of love can be reborn every day, every moment, as a new person. I looked around myself and I realized that these were not just words. It was a reality that I could touch looking at the people around me.

Then the meetings began. I was struck by the fact that the focal point of every meeting was Jesus. To hear the name of Jesus pronounced in that way touched me deeply. I had often heard people speak of Christ crucified but little of Jesus. They spoke to me of him as someone of the family, someone you could not see but who was always there.

I myself experienced this the first time I went to Mass with them. The joy that I felt was the sign of his presence. Little by little as the Mass proceeded I realized that God's grace was touching my soul. God is love, and the principle of life is found in him. To love means to open oneself to life, and to give life. A marvelous adventure seemed to be opening up before my eyes. I was 50 years old, but there was still time to be reborn to a new life.

Mass ended but I remained in my seat confused and disturbed. All of a sudden a doubt came to my mind. Perhaps this was all an illusion. It was all too beautiful to be true. That wonderful dream began to disintegrate.

At this point a priest approached me. I opened myself up to him, telling him that this was all marvelous, but it was not for me. It was too beautiful! I was 50 years old; it could not be for me. I was a very busy man, with a wife and children. How could I possibly dedicate myself to a life such as this?

But the priest quietly said to me, "I know you have a lot to do but this should not be an obstacle. You can continue to do what you did before. The essential lies in doing everything out of love, pure love. And where there is love there is God. When we live in this way our work becomes a prayer. This is precisely what is so new — we can remain in the world and be simultaneously people of action and of contemplation."

I looked at the priest with wide-open eyes. It seemed impossible that it was all as simple as that but he insisted. "You just have to be generous and pure of heart. Of course, it also takes some humility, because it is necessary to make yourself small and trust as a child does."

At this point I had a flash of interior light. I was able to overcome my inner doubts and the voice of my ego which seemed to say, "No, no!" Instead, I took the hand of that priest and I whispered to him, "Yes, Yes. I want to come with you but you have to help me."

After several months I met Foco and shortly afterwards I was accepted in the Focolare Movement as a married Focolarino. I really felt like a new person but after a short time a strange restlessness came back to me.

I still had a thirst for God and therefore I desired some kind of radical purification. I knew that those who commit themselves to living the Gospel must also accept the cross. I also knew that after the first yes, it is necessary to say many more. It seemed to me that my crosses were more than compensated by the gift that God was giving me. I felt overwhelmed by the love of God, but I didn't know what to do. I didn't know how to return this love. I listened to the story in the Gospel of Lazarus and I understood that Jesus was addressing himself to me when he said, "Lazarus, come forth." But I didn't have the courage to come out. I wasn't able to free myself from the ties that bound me to the world.

One day however, during Mass, I felt that Jesus was speaking once more to me and he was saying, "He who loses his life for my sake, will find it, and he who wants to find it, will lose it." Then, pushed by an irresistible force, I cried out in my heart, "Lord, do with me what you will. I offer you my life, my health, my thoughts, my body. I offer you everything, even my eyes." (My eyes were my weak point.)

The life of every day went ahead but, my search for God continued. Finally the awaited day arrived, the moment of God came.

In my office I was forced to denounce one of my subordinates because he had committed some grave errors. This person defended himself by speaking badly of me and my secretary. A period of great tension followed. The truth came to light in the end and a serious punishment was about to befall him.

At this point my secretary and I rejoiced. We had won but at the same time we realized that the punishment which was to be inflicted

could ruin this man and his entire family. Not only could we not be happy but we had to return good for evil. I suggested to my secretary who was a Focolarina that we pray together. She agreed and so together we prayed that nothing harmful would happen to this man. I then remembered my desire for a radical purification and so we continued to pray in this way, "Lord, if, for the evil that has been done, someone must pay, let it be us to pay personally for him."

Exactly one week later I found myself in one hospital, and my secretary in another. I was in for a serious detachment of the retina of my left eye and my secretary for a malignant tumor of the breast.

It was incredible. Jesus had listened to us and immediately answered. Therefore, he was treating us as he treats his friends. Now a marvelous and secret dialogue of love began with Jesus. Accepting this suffering with joy was my way to love him. He showed his love for me by letting me feel his presence. This gave me the strength to smile at everyone.

The people who came to visit me were surprised at my serenity. For me it was an extraordinary experience. I found myself with bandaged eyes in total darkness but I saw Jesus with the eyes of my soul and he was all light. Everything around me was in silence but I could hear his voice. His words were words of love. He said to me, "You were looking for me. Here I am. I'm here. Now we can finally be together.

It is difficult to express in words what I experienced in those moments. That solitude with God was real happiness. It was the true hundredfold. It was that hundredfold that he promises to those that leave everything for him.

After five months I left the hospital. I had lost one eye but I still had the other.

This desire to be purified in such a radical way may seem strange, and yet, at that time, I was so taken by the love of God that I wanted to answer in a drastic way in order to find a deeper union with him.

I have to confess that today I would no longer do what I did then. Now I know that if I am ready to love always, the cross of each day will never be lacking. But I do not regret what I did.

Actually it is better to, so to say, come out into the light with one eye rather than remain all one's life in a dark prison with two eyes.

I have acquired the awareness that God is love even when he makes us cry. I feel as if he carries me in the palm of his hand and he uses me for his plans. I experience an infinite freedom — free from what in the world is most feared, death.

I was expecting it for myself but instead it came for the person closest and dearest to me — my wife wife, Theresa. Two days of agony and then finally, the end. No one around her bed cried, even though we all loved her intensely. This was like a sign for me. No one cries at the bedside of those who have made their life a way of sanctification.

All of our friends gathered around me and my family but not for the usual condolences. We did not hide the fact that we were suffering. At the same time we experienced a deep unity in bearing this suffering together.

The house was filled with people. My grandson, Francesco, who at that time was 12 years old, was always near to me. A lady who often came to visit Theresa came to see us. Francesco asked her, "Now that Grandma is no longer here, will you still come to visit Grandpa?" She hesitated and then answered in an evasive way. This was a big surprise for me. Could it be that I would remain alone? I had never thought of it, but Francesco went ahead. He saw a medical student coming to greet me, a young boy who had been more in our home than in his own and Francesco repeated the question, "And you John, will you still come to visit Grandpa?" He lowered his head, dried a tear and left without answering.

(continued on page 28)

It is difficult to express in words what I experienced in those moments. That solitude with God was real happiness. It is the hundredfold that he promises to those who leave everything for him.

FAMILY LIFE

Weakened family life is one of the greatest social ills of our time.
The "New Family" Movement has as its aim to bring the Focolare spirit of unity into family life, so that each family will be deeply united within itself and with other families.

Carol Spale has known the Focolare Movement for a number of years. She shared her experience during the New Family Seminar at the Mariapolis.

In April, 1979, our second baby, a boy, was born with a very serious birth defect in which the spinal fluid formed a sac attached to his head. There was no certainty that he would live and there was a need for immediate surgery to remove the sac and sew the top of his head.

For my husband and I it was a shock. I remember we were living the word of life, "He had loved his own in this world, and would show his love for them to the end" (Jn. 13:1). It was a constant effort to believe in the love of God no matter what he asked. The prayers of ever everyone were a source of strength especially when a doctor, an intern, told us mistakenly that there would be definite retardation. The most advanced test, in fact, showed that there was brain tissue in the fluid sac.

The doctors waited four days before David's operation so that he would be stronger physically. Especially, in those days I realized that to believe in the love of God, and therefore to trust in him, meant that I had to love those in the hospital around me and make myself one with the other mothers with their new babies, listening to them, helping them when the nurses were not available, and forgetting about my own suffering and the fact that David had been transferred to the Intensive Care Unit of another hospital.

I remember at times, crying when praying to God,asking for the grace to believe in his love, and I found peace. I think that the others felt that my love for them had a deeper source. One of the mothers still calls me and has even given me things for babies.

One of the nurses who was deciding if she should get married or not asked me for advice. I realized that she really needed someone who could listen to her. Before I left the hospital she asked for my address so that she could invite me to the wedding reception.

With a student nurse, I was able to share a little of how I try to live the Gospel and an experience I had had which had changed my life.

Finally the four days passed and the doctor allowed me to go home as long as I did not go to the hospital for David's operation, which was the same day. Even though this was difficult for me, I saw the love of God in this too. My husband was the one who visited David and stayed with him. Through this experience, he became more aware of his role as a father and felt able to give more love.

Again, what I remember is that everyone was praying on the day of the operation and when the doctor began to operate, he found that the test results had been wrong and that there was no brain tissue in the sac. David survived the operation and was sent home on Mother's Day.

He was very weak physically and slept a lot. For me, every time I looked at him, I had to constantly remember to embrace this suffering with love, because the doctor could not be sure how he would develop or if there was any brain damage.

Trying to believe in love in this way, little by little, I found myself more capable of loving those around me with more understanding. When I told others the experience of what had happened, tney asked me how my husband and I could be so calm. With those who asked, I was able to share the word of life and they understood where our strength came from.

In November we had to make another decision. We had known that David had to be operated on to correct the shape of his head and this was difficult to say yes to. But then the hospital called us the day after Thanksgiving and said to bring him in that afternoon. The doctor's receptionist had not been able to noti-

y us beforehand. It was hard to ack him up and take him back to he hospital. Again we had to take he step to love the nurses and those n the hospital and put David once nore into God's hands and trust God would take care of him.

The surgery went well, but afterwards David looked very weak, especially with the bandages wrapped ke a turban around his head. When was visiting him, I felt it was a precious moment and that I could ot feel sorry for him. Rather I had o use that suffering to love more. The maternity nurses saw me and sked how David was and stopped o see him. For me, loving concretely meant, for example, leaving when he doctors and nurses could not et the I.V. back in David's vein, or llowing the nurse who wanted to eep David with her even when I ame to take care of him, to do so. t was difficult for me, but in overoming myself, I found peace and he nurses said they couldmot beeve what a happy baby he was

Again in February, there was another similar operation and this ime, because I had grown to love David even more, it was harder to e ready to give him back to God. But it was also the chance to be vith the nurses again and it was ike being with old friends. He recovered so well from the operation hat one of the nurses remarked, "If David keeps being so good-natured, e will grow up to be a saint!"

This time it was the nurses who oved me. Love was becoming mutual. There had been a mix-up about David's discharge and the doctor never came. The night nurse made special call to the doctor and made rrangements, so when I was ready o go home she said that I could ake David with me. I was so happy! One of the nurses' aides was even rying a little when we left.

Those days in the hospital were joy for me and a rapport was built vith the staff which I think will remain.

I realize now even more how God oves each one of us personally and vhen we love, especially when it is difficult, the love which we receive n return is something which fills us completely because it comes rom God. C. S.

PRAYER OF POPE JOHN PAUL II

FOR THE 1980 SYNOD OF BISHOPS

On September 26th the 1980 Synod of Bishops began. The topic of discussion is the task of the Christian family in the modern world. The Holy Father has said that, "The Synod this year is an important event for the life and mission of the entire church. . . . It is necessary that all participate in this work."

Lord God, from you every family in heaven and on earth takes its name
Father, you are Love and Life.
Through your Son, Jesus Christ, born of woman
and through the Holy Spirit, fountain of divine charity,
grant that every family on earth
may become for each successive generation
a true shrine of life and love.
Grant that your grace may guide
the thoughts and actions of husbands and wives
for the good of their families
and of all the families in the world.
Grant that the young may find in the family
solid support for their human dignity
and for their growth in truth and love.
Grant that love,
strengthened by the grace of the sacrament of marriage,
may prove mightier than all the weaknesses and trials
through which our families sometimes pass.
Through the intercession of the Holy Family of Nazareth,
grant that the Church may fruitfully carry out her worldwide mission
in the family and through the family.
We ask this of you, who are Life, Truth and Love,
with the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

ST. JUSTIN a Philosopher and Martyr

St. Justin was born of heathen parents at Neapolis in Samaria, about the year 103. He was well educated, and gave himself to the study of philosophy, but always with one object, that he might learn the knowledge of God. He sought this knowledge among the contending schools of philosophy, but always in vain, till at last God himself appeased the thirst which he had created. One day, while Justin was walking by the seashore, meditating on the thought of God, an old man met him and questioned him on the subject of his doubts; and when he had made Justin confess that the philosophers taught nothing certain about God, he told him of the writings of the inspired prophets and of Jesus Christ whom they announced, and bade him seek light and understanding through prayer. The Scriptures and the constancy of the Christian martyrs led Justin from the darkness of human reason to the light of faith. In his zeal for the Faith he traveled to Greece, Egypt, and Italy, gaining many to Christ. At Rome he sealed his testimony with his blood, surrounded by his disciples. "Do you think," the prefect said to Justin, "that by dying you will enter heaven, and be rewarded by God?" "I do not think," was the Saint's answer; "I know."

Could the new Christian idea make any impression on intellectuals, on philosophers in particular? Was there any philosophy latent in Christianity? The adventure of a pagan thinker like Justin gives a positive answer to the question: more than a philosophy lies beneath Christianity, it has the Philosopher, the Word himself, clothed in flesh.

In Justin's century, philosophers and philosophies sprouted up everywhere and competed for disciples, trying to join that bewildered but eager search of the truth which an intellectually anemic generation was hoping to find in the thinkers of the past. "The light shines in the darkness," John had said, "but the darkness has not seen it". Sunk in speculation, they had not noticed the Word-Truth which had become Life. The Christians who bore his life in them were looked upon more or less like superstitious fanatics for — How ridiculous! Loving one another, and facing death with joy. It is enough to mention two names: Lucian of Samosata, who restricted himself to sarcastic remarks, and Celsus, a follower of Plato, who joined to irony an inexorable hatred for the new race of Christians.

This was the atmosphere (more or less diffused throughout the Roman empire) that Justin breathed when he was born, around the year 100, at Flavia Neapolis, the ancient Sichem in Palestine. Bacceius, his grandfather, and Priscus his father were pagans. A son of his century, Justin too, is a seeker of truth: he turned to the Stoics, who were scarce in ideas on the subject of God and left him unsatisifed; the Peripatetics sold truth to the sound of money, and Justin was nauseated by that; the Pythagoreans served the truth up in music, in geometry, and astronomy; and that was too complicated to be true. Plato? Justin wavered a bit with him, until somewhere near Ephesus an old man spoke to him about the prophets who had simply proclaimed the truth with honesty. "When he had said these and many other things," Justin relates, "which it is not now the fitting time to tell, that old man went his way, admonishing me to meditate on what he had told me; I never saw him again. But my spirit was immediately bathed with the light of an unexpected fire, and I fell in love with the prophets, and with those who are friends of Christ. While pondering on all his words, I realized that his was the only sure and useful philosophy. That is the way it is, and the reason why I am a philosopher. Furthermore, my wish is that everyone were of the same sentiments as I and would never depart from the Savior's teaching" (dialogue with Trypho, Chapter 8).

The fire which had lighted up the depths of Justin's spirit had been preceded by the witness of the martyrs, which had shaken him. "I was still studying the philosophy of Plato, when I heard the accusations levelled against the Christians. But seeing them so fearless in the face of death and torment — things at which anyone else would be terrified — I realized that it was unthinkable that they could be living in evil and attachment to sinful pleasures.

"For what person so sensual or dissolute as to eat human flesh greedily, would welcome being deprived of his pleasures by death? Would he not try to continue this earthly life and to elude the public officers, rather than offer himself for death as his own sole accuser?...

"When I learned of the veil of lies thrown around the divine doctrines of the Christians by wicked

by SILVANO COLA

In Rome, every idea, every superstition, every perversion was protected by law; only the Christian idea had no right to life. But this did not stop Justin. He went to Rome twice and gathered around him a group of disciples. He denounced the false accusations against the Christians and ended up by being put to death himself.

demons to deter others from following them, I had to laugh at the authors of these lies, and at the fantasies they produced in the popular imagination.

"I confess to being a Christian; I am proud to strive with all my might to be known as one. Not that the teachings of Plato are different from those of Christ, but certainly they are not in every way similar either; neither are those of other writers, the Stoics, the poets, and the historians. Each of them, seeing part of what was connatural to the Divine Word disseminated in the world, spoke some correct truths excellently; but by the fact that they contradicted themselves on extremely important points, it is evident that they did not have heavenly science and indisputable knowledge. All good principles belong to us Christians, regardless of who uttered them first. For, after God the Father we adore and love the Word, who is from the Unbegotten and Ineffable God; he became man for us to heal our weaknesses by sharing them. All writers may certainly have been able to glimpse reality, but only dimly, by means of the congenital seed of Reason planted in them. For the seed of something or its imitation (always granted us only relatively) is one thing, but the original, imitated and shared, is something else" (II Apology nos. 12 and 13).

Justin had been a philosopher in his pagan days, and continued to wear the philosopher's cloak as a Christian. He was a layman, and remained a layman, one might say, by vocation. He was convinced that Christianity did not represent a break with history, for Christ is nothing but the Logos[1] appearing in all its fullness. Previously, whoever had glimpsed some flash of truth, were sharers in his Truth. This phenomenon was particularly evident in the prophets and the greatest pagan philosophers, who could be called Christians, in that sense, before their time. For he writes in the First Apology: "Someone, by false reasoning, might want to overturn our teachings on the grounds that we date the birth of Christ 150 years ago, under Quirinius, and the preaching of His word under Pontius Pilate, concluding from this that we hold all men who lived earlier to have been unaccountable for their actions. Let us then solve this difficulty too. We had anticipated it.

"We were taught that Jesus Christ is the first-Begotten of God, and we declared Him to be God's Word. The whole human race has partaken of Him. However, those who lived by reason are Christians, even if they passed for atheists: as for instance, among the Greeks, Socrates, Heraclitus, and others like them; and, among the foreigners, Abraham, Ananias, Azarias, Misael, Elias, and many others. It is difficult to list the names and

deeds of all; we have to pass them over. For the same reason, those who did not live according to reason, even if born before him, were unjust and enemies of Christ, and murderers of them who did live by reason.

"People, on the contrary, who have lived and do live as followers of Reason, are Christians, intrepid and fearless.

"On the basis of all that has been said, any intelligent person is capable of understanding the reason why Christ (by the power of the Word and the will of God, the Father and Lord of the Universe) was conceived by a Virgin and called Jesus, and why after His crucifixion and death He rose and ascended into heaven" (I Apology, no. 46).

As a layman, Justin was sensitive to the spiritual movements of the non-Christian world; he appreciated them, and felt called to advertise them, and to purify them, to claim them as being really Christian, and bring them back to Christ. Wearing the same cloak as his pagan colleagues, he became an itinerant philosopher, spreading and defending the Christian faith all over the world. Various cities in Asia, Greece, and Italy heard this advocate of a new philosophy, which he presented as "the" philosophy; he was not eloquent, yet he was an irresistible speaker, judging from the writings he has left. Justin touched twice at the center of spiritual gravitation which was Rome, and gathered around him there a group of disciples.

In Rome every idea, every superstition, every perversion was protected by law; only the Christian idea had no right to life, even when decked out in the philosopher's cloak. Justin knew that, but he appeared in the market places just the same, and started public debates. A self-styled Cynic philosopher, named Crescens, wanted to take him on; but he soon realized that his philosophy was ignorance compared with Justin's wisdom. Justin told him so, without mincing his words either, although he could anticipate the words for himself as a consequence, since he writes: "I too expect to fall victim to the plots of one of those magistrates and be fixed to the stake" (II Apology, no. 3).

Justin was already around sixty years old when he sketched these thoughts in his second Apology, addressed to the Roman Senate; it was actually meant, most likely, as an appendix of new arguments to the Apology addressed to the emperor Antoninus Pius. The latter, written a short time before, had provoked no reaction whatever, it would seem. For political reasons the government had found it advisable to close one eye to these religious-philosophical debates. On the other hand, Justin had limited himself in the second Apology to proving the Christians' innocence of the crimes and wickedness of which they were generally accused; and for his part, to accusing the pagans themselves of immorality and corruption; to proving the divinity of Christ; to demonstrating the superiority of Christian doctrine to the pagan; and ultimately to protesting against the accusation of immorality in Christian practices. However, in the second he had not been able to pass over in silence an open injustice recently committed by Urbicus, the prefect of Rome. Three Christians had been beheaded on no other charge than their having confessed that they were Christians. Justin had also denounced the false accusation of Crescens against the Christians. Crescens paid him back by denouncing him to the prefect Junius Rusticus, a friend of Marcus Aurelius, who had him beheaded together with six disciples, following a summary trial.

In line with its evangelical pattern, Christian philosophy was born in blood, shed in the person of Justin, in the reign of the pagan ethical philosopher, the emperor Marcus Aurelius.

There is an aspect of this martyr which is of considerable historical importance. Like Aristides, another contemporary apologist, Justin is a representative member of the world of the laity becoming aware of its particular vocation: to contribute to the Christian renewal of society and to the service of the kingdom of God while remaining committed in the world. This does not mean a Christian mission in the secular world so much as a true mission in the Church, as members of an ecclesial community, the purpose of which is to make Jesus Christ penetrate into the practical, ordinary, daily life of people, transforming the whole universe from what is human into what is divine.

Justin felt this vocation with prophetic force. In the Dialogue with Trypho he writes: "Whoever is able to speak the truth but does not, will be judged by God" (Dialogue, no. 82). And elsewhere: "I care for nothing except to tell the truth, and I shall tell it without fear of anybody, even if I should have to get myself torn to pieces by you at this very moment."

Justin was a philosopher, who had glimpsed the absolute truth of the Word, and pursued it with complete consistency, testifying to it with his death. The incarnate Word, the Philosopher who had revealed his Father's Truth, had likewise been condemned to death. ●

1) One can never quite convey in translation, the meaning of the Greek word "Logos", which means 1) word, 2) reason, 3) thought (from which the English language derives "logic" and the "—logies" like biology, theology, geology...). We will sometimes have to translate it as "word", other times as "reason." But the reader should try to bear in mind that in the original there was the same word for both.

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WORD OF LIFE

"Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Lk.18:14).

You are certainly familiar with the words of Jesus. They are very important; in fact, they can be found in many places in the Gospels.

A similar concept was already contained in the Old Testament.

In the book of Job it is written, "He [God] humbles the arrogance of the proud, but comforts him who has his eyes lowered" [that is, the humble] (Job 40:6).

"Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

We can easily see that in the world, which does not acknowledge God, things are in reverse order. The law of the ego rules or the law of the strong — laws which are fundamentally unjust. The aggressive, the rich, those who are sure of themselves, dominate and oppress the weak and the poor.

But the faith of the poor is in God who one day will overturn this situation. This was what the Virgin Mary said when she sang the Magnificat: "He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree" (Luke 1: 52).

As you have already understood perhaps, this radical change will certainly not happen as the result of a class struggle. Christians do not expect any revolution of human origin to succeed in changing a situation which concerns every person so intimately. They expect this change to be brought about by an intervention from God.

"Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

(Luke 18:14)

At this point you might assume that this implies an attitude of resignation, becoming passive, refusing to take on responsibility. But that is not so. Believers do not fool themselves into thinking that we with our own strength alone are capable of emerging from the unhappy situation of sin, and selfishness which man created by affirming his own ego. They are convinced that it is necessary to recognize the existence of God, and to look to him for salvation, and for true restoration. Moreover, they believe that if they etsablish a relationship of communion with God, then the relationship that unites them with their fellow human beings will become true and authentic, a relationship of equality.

"Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

" . . . he who humbles himself will be exalted."

These words reflect perfectly the situation of those who accept salvation from God with an open heart. Such persons are humble, they know enough not to credit themselves with anything because everything comes from God.

This was the feeling which filled the prodigal son when he returned to his father. It was also the feeling expressed by the tax collector who, as you recall — unlike the Pharisee, who considered himself just — simply stood in the rear of the Temple and beat his breast.

Yes, whoever is humble is loved by God and will be exalted by Him.

"Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Undoubtedly, you can take these words as a warning from Jesus to those who commit the sin of pride and to whoever is tempted to be ambitious.

But Jesus wants to give you something more than a mere moral precept. Humbling oneself means more than simply trying to avoid being ambitious. It means recognizing that before God we are small, and, deciding therefore, to put ourselves in his hands.

Would you like an example? Jesus himself gives you one: a child, or he or she who becomes like a child.

Whoever humbles himself, makes himself available to God. Such a person will receive salvation and be exalted.

"Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

There is one person who humbled himself perfectly, and persevered in this humility to the end — Jesus, who humbled himself, making himself obedient even onto death. But then he rose. This is the exaltation.

You too must follow his example. He wants you to be humble and good so that he can give you eternal life. You can be absolutely certain that just as he has risen, so will you.

"Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

You might ask how we are meant to live this humility. Well, God holds that whatever you do to your neighbors you do to Him. Therefore, be humble before them, *serve them.* Don't be indifferent to them, don't expect things from them, don't be concerned only with your rights. Don't dominate others but love them by serving them even at the cost of giving in or losing something, being able to give up time and things.

And when will this promised exaltation occur? In the new world certainly, in the next life.

But for those who live in the Church this turn-about of situations has already begun here on earth. For if it is true that in the Christian community, believers are

(continued on page 28, column 2)

(continued from page 21)

This clearly opened my eyes to reality. In our home Theresa had been everything. I had the impression that without her, there was no reason for me to remain there. I had to act consequently.

I wrote a letter to Chiara Lubich and told her that I didn't feel like a widower. For me Theresa had merely left on a trip that one day soon I too, would take. In the meantime, if I was acceptable with all my faults and failings, I was ready to totally consecrate myself to God in a Focolare of common life.

I immediately sent this letter to Chiara and then went to see the pastor to make arrangements for the funeral. We had already spoken but I wanted to ask him to speak of the resurrection.

The Mass was a celebration. The church was full and many were standing. The Gen sang their songs. A lady, on leaving the church, said to me, "I felt that I was at a Mass of Holy Thursday."

In the afternoon we brought Theresa to the Mariapolis Center in Rocca di Papa. There Chiara was awaiting us. She knelt to the ground and kissed the coffin. Then she came over to me, she shook my hand and said, "I received your letter and my answer is 'Yes' with all my heart."

A few days later I entered one of the Focolare Centers of Rome. I was was 73 years old and it was like being born for the third time.

A Focolare must be a place where the fire is always burning. Everyone knows that for a fire it is necessary to have logs of wood to burn. But if the logs are too big, it is better to break them into smaller pieces so that they burn better.

Perhaps the work of God in my life could be compared to the job of breaking a large, gnarled piece of wood into smaller pieces so that it could be useful to keep the fire always burning.

God has given my life a new dimension, and I can sincerely say that I am truly happy. ●

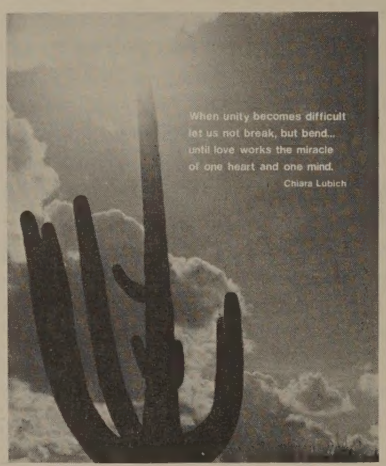
(continued from page 27)

at the service of one another, it is also true that all are equal. Not only that; but the one who commands is as one who serves. The situation therefore is already changed. In fact, because these words we have just spoken about are already lived in the Church, the Church itself is a *sign* to all of humanity of the world to come.

CHIARA LUBICH

Focolare posters

Two new color posters and two black and white (all four 15" x 18")are now available at all the Focolare Centers, or can be ordered by mail from: Focolare Movement, P.O Box 496, New York, N.Y. 10021.


When unity becomes difficult
let us not break, but bend...
until love works the miracle
of one heart and one mind.
Chiara Lubich

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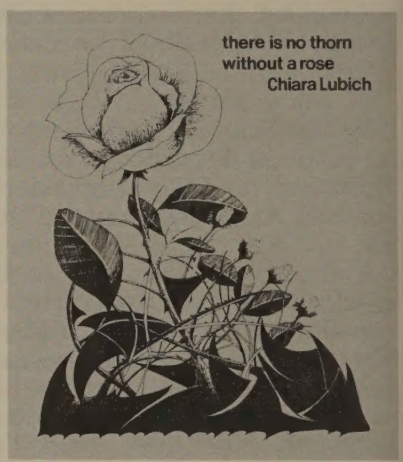

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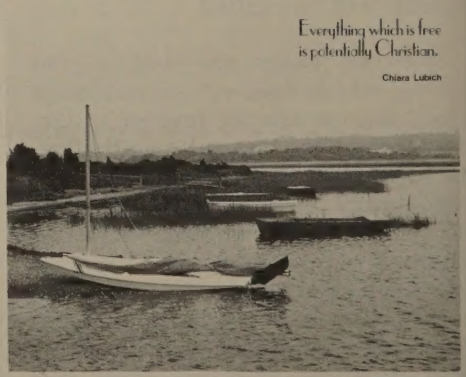


FMPbw3

Price: $2.00/color — $1.50/black and white

If ordered by mail please add handling and shipping charges and specify if you wish to receive them first or third class.

Shipping and handling charges:

FIRST CLASS: **Delivery time: approximately 1 week**

1 poster 1.40, 2 posters 1.55, 3 posters 1.70, 4 posters 1.80. For more than 4 posters, postal rates depend on weight and zone.

THIRD CLASS: **Delivery time: approximately 2 weeks**

1 to 2 posters 1.00, 3 to 4 posters 1.15, 5 to 6 posters 1.30, 7 posters 1.40. For more than 7 posters, postal rates depend on weight and zone.

What is the Focolare Movement?

THE BEGINNINGS

The Focolare Movement began in 1943, in Italy. Chiara Lubich, with a small group of girls, realized in the midst of the total destruction of World War II, that God is the only one worth living for. Hence they began to place the Gospel in the center of their lives. The testament of Jesus became their Ideal: "That all may be one . . . that the world may know that you have sent me, and that you have loved them as you have loved me . . . " (Jn.17: 23). The life lived by these first girls, the spiritual way they spontaneously followed, gave rise to a form of spirituality proper to the Focolare Movement. It represents a powerful means of introducing the Gospel into modern life.

WHO ARE THE FOCOLARINI

The name "Focolarini" takes its origin from the Italian word "fire" and suggests the idea of "carriers of fire."

Single men and women live in separate communities called Focolare Centers. Their principal aim is to achieve unity among themselves through mutual charity practiced twenty-four hours a day. They follow the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. They work as other lay men and women in regular jobs and professions.

Some married persons, even though continuing to live in their families, participate fully in the life of either the men's or women's Focolare Centers in their common effort to achieve this same unity. They are called "Married Focolarini."

THE VOLUNTEERS

The Volunteers, who are also called the "Volunteers of God," would like to transform all human realities according to the Gospel spirit. For this reason they remain in their jobs and in their professions in order to vivify them with this spirit.

Their aim is to help form a society made of men and women who are made "new" by the Gospel message and who can then bring new life to all fields of human activity (education, business, etc.). This results in new social relationships which, in turn, lead to the realization of new structures of society.

THE LARGEST MEMBERSHIP

The largest membership of the Movement is made up of men, women, and young people of all social conditions who are free of any formal ties with it. Their bond of unity stems from their free and willing acceptance of its spirit. They keep in touch with the Movement and with one another through large or small gatherings, publications, correspondence, and personal contact.

People with other commitments, even those bound to religious institutions, can form part of the Movement too because the Movement exists wherever its spirit is lived. People of non-Christian religions are also counted among the Movement's friends. Also those who owe no allegiance to any faith are often attracted by one or another of the Movement's aspects.

GEN

The new generations of the Focolare Movement form another Movement or, better, three movements: the Gen 2, the Gen 3 and the Gen 4 Movements, divided according to their various age groups. "Gen" stands for new generation.

Thousands of young people all over the world have been attracted by the spirituality of unity. Their number continues to grow.

At the core of this large group of youth, are Gen who have committed themselves to living the Gospel message of love. The Gen use all possible means to share with other youth the conviction they have that the Gospel is the answer to every question and the motive for everything they do.

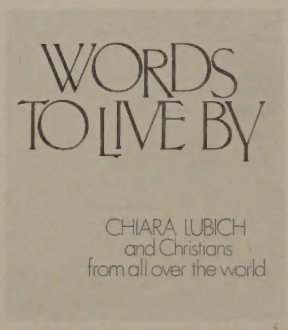
THE MAIN TALKS OF
THE 1980 MARIAPOLIS

chiara lubich

when our love is charity

At the beginning of 1980 John Paul II addressed the following words to some members of the Focolare Movement.
"Charity, love comes first of all from God and returns to him, 'God is Love,' says St. John. . . . and also, 'How can anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, love God, whom he has not seen?' (1Jn. 4:20).
"The Christian vocation, and particularly the spirituality of the Focolare Movement, demands that this truth concerning God and man be put into practice. I encourage you to go deeply into it and live it. . . ."
The Focolare Movement is — as its foundress Chiara Lubich states — a concrete experience of Charity. In this book she speaks about this experience.

paper $2.25



Chiara Lubich is one of those people who have taken the Gospel seriously, discovered the life that is in it, and wished to share it with others. This is the reason why, for over thirty years, the members of the Focolare Movement have chosen a sentence of the Gospel each month and, day after day, have tried to put it into practice.
Now, millions of copies of the "Word of Life" and its commentary are distributed each month and it is lived throughout the whole world, for the Word of God is dynamic and communicative by its very nature. When it is lived, it changes people and transforms the universe.
This is what this book would like to show. It has been written during the course of a whole year. It is drawn straight from life.

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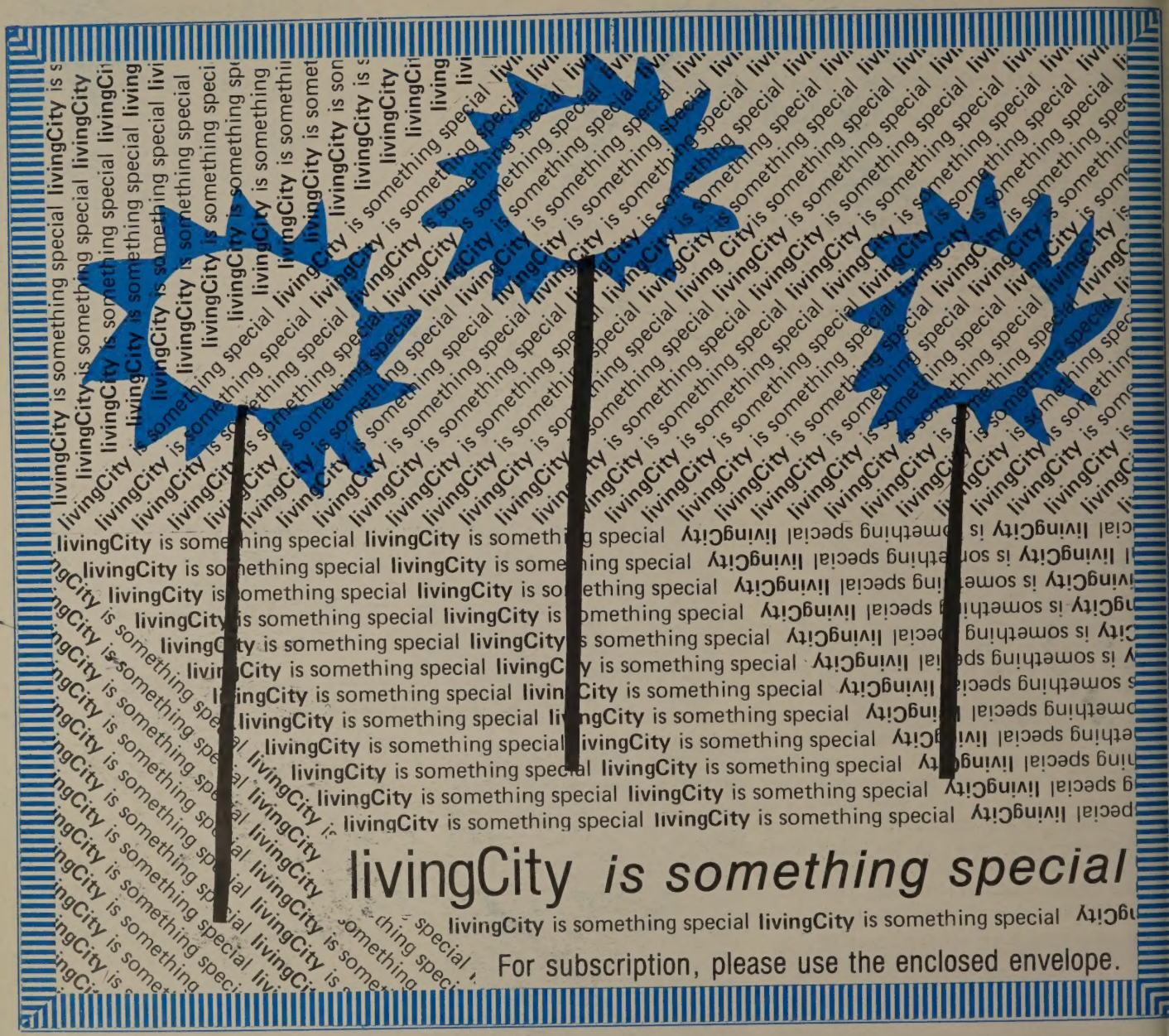
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